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THESIS

THE FUTURE STATUS
OF
PUERTO RICO:
IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

by

Shirley E. Roman

December 1991

Thesis Advisor:

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The thesis examines the historical and present day influence of the U.S. Congress on Puerto Rico's political status. In so doing it indicates what dominant national interests will most likely affect the outcome of a status plebiscite. It concludes that the most desirable status option for the United States and the Caribbean is the enhanced commonwealth status. However, Congress should approve a binding plebiscite only when Puerto Ricans have expressed a clear consensus for any particular option (no less than 60 percent). Until then, the status quo remains a flexible, viable position.

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The Future Status Of Puerto Rico: Implications For U.S.
Foreign Policy

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the evolution of U.S.-Puerto Rican relations and the current drive to permanently define the island's political status. It analyzes the pros and cons of the three status options (statehood, independence, and enhanced commonwealth) in terms of U.S. national interest. It argues that the status selected will have significant implications for the U.S. interests, especially in the military (Caribbean security) and the war on drugs) and economic spheres.

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I. THE FUTURE STATUS OF PUERTO RICO: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Puerto Rico came to us voluntarily and without bloodshed. She welcomed us with open arms. Her adherence to the United States during the Spanish war saved the loss possibly of many lives and the expenditure of millions of money. Her people welcomed the armies under Miles as deliverers and benefactors. They professed themselves ready to become peaceable and loyal citizens of this country...They are orderly, law abiding, and anxious for development...If any people on earth deserve fair and considerate treatment at our hands it is the people of Puerto Rico.

*Representative Jacob H. Bromwell.
1900¹*

Puerto Rico consists of six islands in the Caribbean located about 1,000 miles southeast of Florida. The population is comprised of roughly 3.5 million² Hispanic citizens of the United States, which gives it a population greater than 27 American states.

The recent history of the islands is one that has been dominated by its ever-shifting political status in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. It was the United States that emerged as the prevailing power in Puerto Rico at the war's conclusion. Thus the island's political status

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1. Jose Carbranes, *Citizenship and the American Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979)
 2. Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, *Puerto Rico Status Referendum Act*, report prepared by Senator Johnston, 101st Cong., 1st sess., 1989, p. 18.

was and is today defined within the dynamics of the United States-Puerto Rico relationship.

Puerto Rico has been a commonwealth of the United States since 1952; a position resented by many Puerto Ricans who would prefer statehood or independence.

From time to time, the United States government has sought to modify the nature of Puerto Rican relations. That attempt has been driven by numerous factors such as the intense political pressure exerted by Puerto Rico's leaders, the island's role in Caribbean security (particularly during World War I up through the Cold War Era), and the current international trend towards self-determination for formerly subjugated countries. However, the issue of Puerto Rico's unresolved political status has been largely relegated to the backburners of United States congressional and presidential concerns. Nonetheless, it continues to persist as a significant issue for U.S. "foreign" policy.

In general, Puerto Rico has derived some enormous political, social, and economic benefits from its commonwealth status vis-a-vis the United States, in ways that the rest of Latin America has not. The pros and cons of this treatment and subsequent political status developments have often been discussed in terms of the Puerto Rican perspective. This thesis will focus on Puerto Rico's future from the perspective of the U.S. government. In the case of Puerto Rico's political status, a most basic premise is that mat-

ters affecting U.S. national interest will, in most cases, be decided primarily by the legislative process and U.S. foreign and domestic policies. When according levels of importance to various factors, the major influence upon the outcome of the future status of Puerto Rico lies in the degree of dependency and political friction which has been perpetuated by the intimate embrace of the United States. It follows that the status issue is not strictly one of the right to self-determination. Indeed, practicality dictates that this issue be looked at in terms of the goals of the U.S. foreign policy position for both Puerto Rico and the Caribbean as whole, and what is perceived as being best for the national interest of the United States.

In 1991, the people of Puerto Rico were to have an opportunity to vote on their future political status in relation to the United States. In doing so, it might have appeared that the United States had become involved in a sincere effort to "assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way",³ but legislative efforts became not only bogged down in the course of the complicated congressional process, but completely stifled by personal and public concerns as well.

It is the finding of this thesis that it is in the best interest of the United States to have its elected officials

3. Richard S. Kirkendall, "Truman Doctrine", *Encyclopedia Americana*. Volume 27. (New York: Americana Corporation, 1976) p. 176.

perform a comprehensive examination of the viability of the three options being offered and their potential implications for United States foreign policy, particularly in the military, terrorism, political, and economic spheres.

The options are: statehood, independence, enhanced commonwealth status, or the status quo by default. The first two choices would signal the final evolution of Puerto Rico's political status. However, any new status choice will necessarily result in changes in Caribbean relations in general.

Once the optimum choice has been identified, then the delicate task of using the democratic process to ensure the most favorable outcome for the United States will begin.

Although some American presidents and congressmen have expressed adamant support for the idea of statehood, and even a token tolerance for the idea of independence, it is a given that *realpolitik* (political reality as opposed to political idealism) tends to produce a foreign policy solution that is least drastic and disruptive for the United States and the region in question. Although the status quo represents the least drastic and disruptive of the choices, the argument of this thesis is that the United States Congress should commit itself to passing status legislation when and only when there exists a clearly expressed consensus (more than 60% support for an option) among Puerto Ricans for a preferred status. Therefore, until that

condition can be fulfilled, it is the current commonwealth status that will be shown to best suit the national interest. In addition, enhancement features can be added on without having to hold a plebiscite. This will alleviate some of Puerto Rico's economic problems and give more autonomy to the Puerto Rican government.

The foreign policies of the United States change in response to the evolution of perceived U.S. national interests as they are articulated by the President, Congress, and other national leaders. Puerto Rico's political status evolved largely in response to U.S. congressional action and changing U.S. national interests. Therefore, the historical as well as present-day congressional role in resolving Puerto Rico's status question will be examined, while the factors which contributed to the apparent failure of the 101st Congress to produce status referendum legislation will also be analyzed.

Ultimately, congressional attitudes and patterns have historically allowed American interests decide the island's political status. This interests often have little direct link to Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. This thesis will demonstrate that legislative efforts by the 101st Congress failed to produce a referendum bill for numerous reasons, the primary one being the threat of the potential costs to the federal budget.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On November 19, 1493, Columbus discovered the island called *Boriquen* by the native Indians. He renamed the island San Juan Bautista, and subsequently, set in motion a chain of events that eventually led to the imposition of Spanish rule, African slavery, and the emergence of a distinct racial, cultural "Puerto Rican". The new Puerto Rican forged his own identity and continually rebelled against government abuses throughout the four centuries of Spanish rule and later, commonwealth relationship.⁴

In 1898, the Spanish-American war broke out and Cuba and Puerto Rico became hapless pawns in the quest for American expansion. Military strategists such as Alfred T. Mahan clearly ascribed strategic value to Puerto Rico when he said:

Puerto Rico, considered militarily, is to Cuba, to the future isthmian Canal and to our Pacific coast, what Malta is, or may be, to Egypt and the beyond.⁵

The outcome of the war was a decisive victory for the United States, for in October of 1898 the United States War Department presided over the incorporation of Puerto Rico into the military geographical department. This acquisition

4. Morton J. Golding, *A Short History Of Puerto Rico*, (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1973) p. xiii-xv.

5. Alfred T. Mahan, *Lessons of the War with Spain* (Boston: 1918), p. 29

furthered the goal of United States expansion in the Caribbean for the fulfillment of strategic and economic national objectives, without benefit of clear political objectives for the Puerto Rico United States relation.

As a result, American policymakers were driven to make changes to Puerto Rico's status primarily in response to perceived crises in U.S. national security. These gradual additions of political rights were delivered as token gestures of goodwill, without the promise for future self-determination. However, the expectations for political equality were taken seriously by the Puerto Rican people. Thus the foundation for the current dilemma of who and how Puerto Rico's political status will be defined was laid long ago.

Puerto Rican history is full of examples of men and women struggling to elevate their island's status by advancing the causes of either independence, statehood, or commonwealth status. Those who supported the commonwealth proposition obtained some measure of satisfaction when the Commonwealth Constitution of Puerto Rico was inaugurated on the island on July 25, 1952. However, the debate over Puerto Rico's status continued even after the adoption of the Commonwealth Constitution, and the status referendum held in 1967.

In 1991, the people of this island were to have the opportunity to vote on their future political status in

relation to the United States. It was President George Bush who acted as the catalyst for the ensuing status legislation effort. President Bush, in his very first appearance before Congress on February 9, 1989 reiterated his support for statehood for Puerto Rico by urging Congress to begin the process that would lead to a vehicle for the island's self-determination. The President's call to action was subsequently answered and led by Senate Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman, J. Bennett Johnston, a Democrat from Louisiana, and James A. McClure, a Republican from Idaho. Their ultimate goal was to once and for all settle the status question by drafting a self-executing bill that would in effect obligate the United States government to implement whatever option was chosen in a Puerto Rican plebiscite.

III. DEFINING THE STATUS OPTIONS

The following section will define and analyze the status options available to Puerto Rico.

An understanding of the central nature of the three status options involved is paramount in the decision-making process. Enhanced commonwealth, statehood and independence are not just political status choices. Indeed their economic implications have undergone as much if not more scrutiny. Intensive query into the options has already been completed by select committee members of the 101st Congress. The recorded results constitute a firm foundation for any future Congress to produce plebiscite legislation.

A. ENHANCED COMMONWEALTH STATUS

The United States and Puerto Rico share a common defense, market, and currency under the present commonwealth status. However, the nature of this option has changed since its endorsement in the 1967 plebiscite. It now goes beyond opting for maintaining the status quo and instead, emphasizes the need for an enhanced commonwealth status that is intended to be more beneficial to both the United States and Puerto Rico in a variety of ways. First, it is the far less disruptive choice, with the least risks and minimal unknowns. Second, the mutual economic advantages for the United States and Puerto Rico will serve to strengthen both

economies, and in fact, lessen the current financial drain upon the United States.

When Puerto Rico first became an American commonwealth in 1952 it gained considerable autonomy over matters of local self-government that was a marked departure from its former long-standing relationship with Spain. The adoption of the Jones Act of 1917 and the Crawford-Butler Act of 1947 specifically represented a substantial step toward home rule.⁶ For example, Puerto Ricans elect their own governor and bicameral legislature, and there is an effective government and political infrastructure in place.

The commonwealth status has an inherently high degree of built-in flexibility, although Commonwealth leaders attempted to perfect some aspects of the status in 1959, 1963, and 1974 without success. No doubt, mainland U.S. leaders could be more responsive to the preferences of Puerto Rican citizens by formulating more mutually satisfying policies. It is, by and large, the flexibility of commonwealth status has given commonwealth its long-term legitimacy among the majority of island, mainland, and international political actors.

An increased degree of autonomy is a feature of the proposed enhanced commonwealth status that would appear to

6. Pamela S. Falk, *The Political Status Of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Americas Society, 1986), p. 5.

satisfy a great many Puerto Ricans and be simultaneously agreeable to the United States.

Enhanced commonwealth provisions give the governor the authority to promote Puerto Rico's international interests; the president may intervene only after 30 days if such action is seen as contrary to U.S. policy.⁷ At the same time, any major Federal action affecting Puerto Rico would have to be accompanied by a document evaluating the consistency of the proposed action with the policy referred to above.⁸

Under an enhanced commonwealth status, even though the Puerto Rican people are U.S. citizens, politically it would be the United States that would still have the greater control in a number of ways. Mainland political parties can tap the islanders for support during presidential primaries even though Puerto Ricans would not be able to vote in presidential elections. Neither will Puerto Ricans have a vote in the United States Congress. In effect, it is Washington that will make decisions on Puerto Rico's participation in federal programs, based on reasons that have nothing to do with equal treatment under the laws guaranteed by the United States Constitution.⁹ Puerto Rico is not without representation in the U.S. Congress under the com-

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7. Regina Brzozowski, "Puerto Rico: Views on Status Alternatives", *The Times of the Americas*, 26 July 1989, p. 5.
 8. Office Of The Assistant Secretary Of Defense Memorandum to DASD Brown, Inter-American Affairs, Subject; Statehood, Independence and Commonwealth Legislation for Puerto Rico, 25 May 1989.
 9. Regina Brzozowski, "Puerto Rico: Views on Status Alternative", *The Times of the Americas*, 26 July 1989, p. 6.

monwealth status. Indeed, the presence of Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner ensures the political representation of the Puerto Rican people on the floor of the House of Representatives, albeit as a non-voting member.

Among the list of several benefits associated with the commonwealth status, is the obtainment of an invaluable source of military draftees. In fact, many Puerto Ricans have seen service since World War I. Approximately 18,000 Puerto Ricans served in the American military at that time, and some were used to defend key installations in the Panama Canal Zone. Again, during World War II, over 65,034 island Puerto Ricans supplemented the United States' war effort. Furthermore, in the Korean Conflict, more soldiers came from Puerto Rico than from 20 states, and their numbers of injuries surpassed all states per capita. Puerto Rican forces were utilized in Vietnam as well. The 270 Puerto Rican combat deaths place the island's contribution of military personnel ahead of 14 states.¹⁰ More recently, over 15,000 Puerto Ricans¹¹ fought in Operation Desert Storm. In addition to this significant contribution is the fact that the United States has been able to establish a strong military presence in the Caribbean in part by developing army, air

10. *Congressional Record - Senate*, 14 March 1991, p. S3462.

11. Tom Wicker, *America's Captive Nation*, *New York Times* 22 Feb. 91

force, and navy bases on federal government-controlled land in Puerto Rico.

It is the economic benefits that are by far the most obvious reasons for continuing the commonwealth status. Over 300 subsidiaries of major U.S.-owned corporations are based in Puerto Rico, and these subsidiaries generate a total profit of over \$3 billion annually¹². The primary lure for building plants there for these successful corporations has been the enormous tax breaks (to the tune of \$2 billion a year) that have been made available. As a result, the island has become a manufacturing base for apparel, electronics and pharmaceuticals.¹³ Furthermore, the United States derives benefits from the commonwealth status through a well-entrenched economic monopoly.

American corporations produce goods whose primary market is in the United States, and this is so not because there is a United States market for specifically Puerto Rican goods, or even goods made from specifically Puerto Rican materials, but because Puerto Rico is a convenient place for converting raw materials brought to the island into goods that mainland citizens of the United States will buy. The consumer goods flooding the island are, at the same time, essentially those of the United States. They are sold in Puerto Rico in chains of supermarkets such as ...J.C. Penney, and Woolworth, all United States owned.¹⁴

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12. Micheal H. Erisman, *The Caribbean Challenge: U.S. Policy In A Volatile Region*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 81.
13. Harry McPherson, "Puerto Rico's Choice." *Washington Post*, May 15, 1990.
14. Byron Williams, *Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, State, Or Nation?*, pp. 200-201.

Puerto Ricans too enjoy special economic and social benefits. The right to unrestricted emigration to the United States acts as a "safety valve" to reduce population pressure and continued rural-urban drift.¹⁵ According to the New York Times exemptions for payment of federal income taxes, coupled with free access to the mainland market has also helped the development of the economy by enabling Puerto Rican and U.S. firms to create more jobs. Additionally, the island receives over \$6 billion annually in federal assistance programs. The island has further been able to provide essential services via their own effective state income tax structure. These unique benefits have produced superb economic performance overall. In fact, "the densely populated, resource-poor island now enjoys a living standard far above that of any Caribbean or Latin American nation."¹⁶

The proposed "enhanced" commonwealth status would go so far as to grant Puerto Rico quasi-sovereign powers, like the ability to negotiate trade agreements with other countries. Puerto Rico would be both free to restrict imports of competing Latin American agricultural produce, and able to control which foreign airlines fly to and from the island.

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15. Carlos E. Santiago and Erik Thorbecke, "A Multisectional Framework for the Analysis of Labor and Development in LDCs: An Application to Postwar Puerto Rico", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol 37, No. 1, Oct 1988.
16. Peter Passell, "Debate on Puerto Rico Rests on a Bottom Line", *New York Times*, 15 May 1990.

The goal of these new powers would be as Governor Rafael Hernandez Colon stated, "to make Puerto Rico the economic gateway between Europe and Latin America".

A stronger Puerto Rican economy could result from an improved commonwealth status, and given the fact that Puerto Rico absorbs about \$850 million (roughly 10 percent) of the U.S. food stamp program, and that the per capita income is less than half that of the mainland, the United States too would benefit since it would no longer have to prop up the island's economy to such a great extent¹⁷.

Puerto Rico's phenomenal growth can be directly attributed to the ability of people to capitalize on the positive features of the commonwealth status. Therefore, there are those who oppose any modification of the current status, arguing that any change could adversely affect the rate of growth¹⁸.

This economic dependence upon the mainland is the most glaring disadvantage of the commonwealth status for Puerto Rico. Measurable economic successes have been offset by the fact that Puerto Rico could not thrive without aggressive U.S. economic policies. In effect, some of these policies actively reinforce the weaknesses of the island's economy.

17. H. Michael Erisman, *The Caribbean Challenge: U.S. Policy in a Volatile Region*, p. 81.

18. United States-Puerto Rico Commission, *Status Of Puerto Rico*, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1966), p. 53.

For example, federal corporate tax-free manufacturing accounts for 40 percent of the output, but agricultural production contributes a mere 1.5 percent.¹⁹ This level of agricultural output is unusually low for a tropical island, and results in an excessive need to import food items, thus exacerbating dependency.

The effects of an oversupply of labor also contribute to Puerto Rico's economic woes. Federal minimum wage laws have kept worker compensation high relative to island standards. This, combined with the unrestricted right to mainland migration under the commonwealth status, have worked to keep labor costs close to those of the United States. Low per capita output, coupled with high worker compensation, discourages labor-intensive industry growth that would otherwise absorb excess workers. One result is that the government is constantly pressured to provide well-paying government jobs to one in four Puerto Ricans, knowing that its ability to do so is contingent upon the continuation of massive federal aid and tax revenues from corporations drawn to the island by special tax breaks.²⁰ Lastly, the substantial dollar amount of direct federal assistance afforded under the commonwealth status may be viewed by some in Washington as an amount that should be curtailed, perhaps

19. Peter Passel, "Debate on Puerto Rico Rests on a Bottom Line", *New York Times*, 15 May 1990.

20. Ibid.

because of the budget deficit or frustration with the perception of Puerto Rico as a welfare state.

B. STATEHOOD

Supporters of the statehood option have long argued that the commonwealth status is a transitional solution that could lead to independence and the resultant loss of prized American citizenship. Statehood is then an irrevocable way of guaranteeing permanent citizenship for millions of Puerto Ricans.²¹ Puerto Rican statehood supporters have an ally in President George Bush, who has expressed a preference for granting statehood.

Statehood would bring additional benefits for Puerto Rico. For example, Puerto Rico would have unique, exclusive rights to seabed and natural resources within a 200-mile radius²².

Statehood advocates tend to minimize the potential burden of the requirement to pay both federal and state taxes by pointing out that this requirement would be delayed for a few years. They also insist that the tax-paying

21. Henry Wells, *The Modernization Of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 245.

22. James J. Kilpatrick, "Puerto Rico: Unappealing Options", *The Monterey Herald*, 16 August 1989, p. 23.

capacity will equal that of other poor states after the economy adjusts to increased investment and federal expenditures.²³

There are certain political advantages to be considered as well. Although Puerto Rico has managed to successfully govern itself on a local basis, there is no significant participation on the federal level. The statehood option would correct this by providing Puerto Rico the opportunity to not only continue electing its own governor and legislature, but also its share of United States senators and proportionate representatives. In addition, Puerto Ricans would also gain the right to vote in presidential elections as full-fledged citizens.²⁴

Statehood, as opposed to commonwealth, may be seen as the more desirable option to many in Washington because Puerto Rico will require its citizens to start paying federal income taxes after two years. Thus as author Pamela Falk puts it, "By giving, we will provide more dignity to our receiving."

Once again, the realities of a poor economic situation play a key role in making a particular option far less

23. Henry Wells, *The Modernization Of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 246.

24. Pamela S. Falk, *The Political Status Of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Americas Society, 1986), p. 16.

attractive. The fact that Puerto Rico will become a source for federal income taxes does not outweigh the reality that statehood would cost the U.S. Treasury some \$25 billion by the year 2000. This would be as a result of many large companies leaving the island because of the elimination of special tax breaks. Consequently, unemployment would double, more families would qualify for a greater amount of federal aid, and the U.S. perception of Puerto Rico as a welfare state would be perpetuated.

The Congressional Budget Office confirmed that statehood would increase the amount of federal aid to individuals from \$2 billion now to \$5 billion by 1995. One-third of the island's personal income would be derived from this source.²⁵

For some there are also cultural factors that hinder support for Puerto Rican statehood. After all, Puerto Rico is by all intents and purposes a small, Latin American, Spanish-speaking country, and historically, Latin America and its culture have not been highly regarded by many North Americans.

Conversely, the use of Spanish as the official language could prove to be a hopelessly contentious, political issue where Puerto Ricans may be unwilling to compromise. This unwillingness to compromise on the issue of language may be costly for the United States as well. Federal courts would

25. Peter Passell, "Debate On Puerto Rico Rests On A Bottom Line", *New York Times*, 15 May 1990.

be granted the special privilege of having to conduct all litigation proceedings in Spanish at the request of any party. This produces the burden of dual record-keeping and the hiring of court translators. Thus American officials have avoided the issue because of its highly emotional nature and potential costs.²⁶

C. INDEPENDENCE

There has always been a segment of the Puerto Rican population involved in various degrees of independence advocacy activities. In this present era of Soviet-East bloc declarations of independence, it is conceivable that international support would be on the side of permanent Puerto Rican independence.

The establishment of a Republic of Puerto Rico is first and foremost about the Nationalist's call to the right to rejoin the Latin American political community in keeping with their cultural affinity. Second it is about Puerto Rico's need to end economic dependency on the United States.

Although independence would mean the eventual loss of current financial benefits and unrestricted access to the mainland, a sovereign Puerto Rico may use the Caribbean

26. Jeffrey Schmalz, "With U.S. Help, Puerto Rico Seeks Its Own Identity", *New York Times*, 10 July 1989, pp. A1 and A9.

Basin Initiative to retain some of those benefits, and thus avoid an economic disaster.²⁷

The option of independence has some serious drawbacks for the United States. The loss of Federal money may destabilize the island with far-reaching consequences for the region if borrowed Wall Street capital cannot be replaced. Economic failure, coupled with radical anti-American leadership, could pave the way for civil war, or communist insurgent groups.²⁸

The Department of Defense (DOD) has the most reason for concern over the independence option. Naval Station Roosevelt Roads and radar installations are seen as vital U.S. military assets that would be foolish to abandon. Although DOD officials have couched the expression of the desire for the United States to retain select military facilities in Puerto Rico in diplomatic terms, there are indications that base retention is a national security issue where United States' prerogatives will most likely prevail. Furthermore, the language of the proposed bill states that "The Republic of Puerto Rico shall be closed to any and all military forces of foreign nations." Lastly, if the majority of Puerto Ricans believed that independence loomed inevitably ahead, such a stampede of immigration might ensue the likes

27. "Fudging The Facts On Puerto Rico", *New York Times*, 17 July 1989, p. A 14.

28. James J. KilPatrick, "Puerto Rico: Unappealing Options", *The Monterey Herald*, 16 August 1989, p. 23.

of which would surpass the 40 percent of Puerto Rico's population that has already emigrated to the United States since 1945.²⁹

29. H. Michael Erisman, *The Caribbean Challenge: U.S. Policy In A Volatile Region*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 191.

IV. HISTORY OF ISSUE IN CONGRESS

A. FORAKER ACT

The following section explores the history of the issue of Puerto Rico status, as debated in the U.S. Congress.

In 1898 the United States acquired a Puerto Rican island whose inhabitants had jubilantly welcomed the American presence because of the prospects for American citizenship. On July 25, 1898, General Nelson A. Miles, commanding officer of the American troops, had implied that the islanders would soon be permanently and directly integrated into the American political system.

This proclamation asserted that American forces, 'bearing the banner of freedom', bore with them, 'the fostering arm of a nation of free people, whose greatest power is in justice and humanity to all those living within its fold' and promised to 'bestow the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our Government...[and] the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization.'³⁰

The high expectations of the Puerto Ricans gradually withered with the realization that in acquiring Puerto Rico, the United States had no intention of granting either independence or statehood. Instead, Puerto Rico's status, as well as that of Guam and the Philippines, became an uncertainty by virtue of the fact that the United States altered the traditional purpose for territory acquisition.

30. Jose A. Cabranes, *Citizenship and the American Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 19.

In the past, territories were seen as "embryonic states that required nurturing to prepare them for full statehood".³¹ An exception to Puerto Rico and the other islands was made primarily for racial reasons. Therefore, the islands became American possessions, without the traditional treaty provisions for citizenship or statehood.

In February of 1900, members of the House and Senate debated the merits of various legislation that would culminate in the production of Puerto Rico's first organic political statute. It is evident from the recorded comments during the congressional debates that racism played a key role in how Puerto Rico's status was defined. The Foraker Act, adopted in April of 1900, granted the United States the right to hold Puerto Rico as a colony, thus avoiding incorporation and the granting of American citizenship.³² In this case, legislation which was intended to resolve issues of trade and commerce became linked to citizenship, race, and the possible ramifications for the Philippine Islands.

Although the majority of House and Senate members favored the incorporation of Puerto Rico, they were convinced that to do so would establish a precedent for the Philippines. In other words, if Puerto Rico became an incorporated

31. Pamela S. Falk, *The Political Status of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Americas Society, 1986), p. 4.

32. Jose Cabranes, *Citizenship and the American Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 26-44.

territory, then some members feared that a similar status, with free trade provisions, would have to be given to the Philippines. Therefore, members of congress debated Puerto Rico's political status relative to the Philippines question. Congressional rhetoric clearly reveals expressed racism, fear, and loathing of the Filipino people. Perhaps Senator Bates articulated this best when he said,

That some Filipinos were "physically weaklings of low stature, with black skin, closely curling hair, flat noses, thick lips, and large clumsy feet." He doubted that the precedent of "expanding our authority once to the Europeans living in Louisiana can be deemed as sustaining the incorporation of millions of savages, cannibals, Malays, Mohammedans, head hunters, and polygamists into even the subjects of an American congress."³³

As in the case of the Philippines, congressional policy formulation for Puerto Rico was influenced by racial attitudes, albeit "favorably" erroneous ones. Members of congress tended to look with favor on Puerto Rico based on dubious census reports concerning its racial composition. The reports evidently misled Senator Payne into assuring Congress that "'generally full-blooded white people, descendants of the Spaniards, possibly mixed with some Indian blood, but none of them of Negro extraction" outnumbered

33. Ibid, p. 40.

nearly two to one the combined total of Negroes and mulattos.'"³⁴ Nevertheless, even those who believed that Puerto Rico could benefit the United States economically and politically had reservations about the alleged racial composition of the island. Men like Senator Depew did not want the United States to go so far as to "incorporate the alien races, and civilized, semi-civilized, barbarous, and savage peoples of these island into our body politic as states of our union."³⁵

The adoption of the Foraker Act therefore neither incorporated Puerto Rico, nor freed the United States from its political obligation. Instead, Puerto Rico was given the status of insular territory and possession of the United States so as to avoid any possibility of moral or constitutional obligation to incorporate the Philippines.

B. JONES ACT

In 1917 the United States Congress passed the Jones Act which among other things, conferred American citizenship on the Puerto Ricans.³⁶ Once again, race played a role in the altering of Puerto Rico's political status. The proposal for the granting of citizenship garnered little opposition among the members of Congress because it was apparent that the

34. Ibid, p. 31.

35. Ibid, p. 44.

36. Beth Donovan, "Islanders May Soon Decide Age-Old Status Question", *Congressional Quarterly*, 15 July 1989, p. 1759.

Philippines was well on its way to independence. In addition, World War I and the German threat to the Caribbean made the conference of citizenship a matter of prudent security.³⁷

As in the debate over the Foraker bill, race, culture and geographic proximity were the dominant items of discussion concerning the Jones bill. Representative Towner, co-founder of the Jones bill in the House, endorsed the bill by stating that "nearly three-fourths of the population are white, mostly of Spanish descent."³⁸ Representative Huddleston of Alabama noted that:

The people of Port Rico³⁹ are of our race, they are people who inherit an old civilization - a civilization which may be fairly compared to our own.⁴⁰

While the majority of congressmen favored the granting of American citizenship on the basis of the alleged racial similarity, some were equally bent on limiting the boundaries of that status so as not to grant statehood to a people whom they believed to be were racially dissimilar.

37. Jorge Heine, *Time for Decision*, (Lanham, Maryland: North-South Publishing Co., 1976) p. 216.

38. Jose Carbranes, *Citizenship and the American Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) p. 82.

39. Between 1900 and 1932, Puerto Rico was officially misspelled as "Porto Rico" - a result of a spelling error in English version of the Treaty of Paris. Treaty of Paris, December 10, 1898, United States-Spain, 30 Stat. 1754, T.S. no 343. This incorrect spelling was formally used first in the formulation of the Foraker Act. Foraker Act (Puerto Rico), ch. 191, 31 Stat. 77 (1900).

40. Cabranes, Citizenship and the American Empire, p. 83.

Representative Joseph Connors of Illinois,...who believed that the people of Port Rico have not the slightest conception of self-government, opposed the citizenship idea for a variety of reasons, mostly racial. He was evidently unpersuaded by the general characterizations of the Puerto Ricans as a largely white people. Noting that he had visited Puerto Rico three times, he informed the House that Porto Rico is populated by a mixed race. About 30 percent of the population are pure African...[and fully] 75 to 80 percent of the population...was pure African or had an African strain in their blood.⁴¹

Connors's ideal status for Puerto Rico was similar to what the Foraker Act had established.

'God forbid, he asserted to the recorded applause of his colleagues, 'that in his time or mine, there should be statehood for Porto Rico [sic] as one of the United States.'⁴²

Thus, while Congress supported the passage of the Jones Act which resulted in the conferment of American citizenship on the Puerto Ricans, they did so as an act of ensuring national security stemming from concern over the German presence in the Caribbean. The new status did very little to abolish the political reality of Puerto Rico's colonial status.

C. COMMONWEALTH CONSTITUTION

The advent of the Cold War precipitated a substantive change in the political status of Puerto Rico. In 1950, urged on by President Truman, Congress set in motion the political process that would produce the *Estado Libre Asoc-*

41. Ibid, p. 90.

42. Ibid, p. 90.

ciado. "Commonwealth" was adopted as the English translation of the Spanish phrase, *Estado Libre Asociado* as to avoid the suggestion to Congress that Puerto Rico was to become a state as the translation, "Free Associated State" would tend to imply.⁴³

Thus, when the Commonwealth Constitution of Puerto Rico was inaugurated on the island on July 25, 1952,⁴⁴ it marked a significant achievement for supporters of the commonwealth status. However, the debate over Puerto Rico's status continued even after the adoption of the Commonwealth Constitution, because once again, there was little change in the United States-Puerto Rican relationship as set forth in the Foraker Act. This prompted the United States to establish a joint commission to further study the status question.

1. 1967 Plebiscite

As a result of this commission, an island plebiscite was held in 1967 in which the majority vote from among the choices of independence, statehood, or continued commonwealth status was cast in favor of the status quo. [see table 1.1]

43. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act*, Report prepared by Congressman Udall, 101st Cong., 2d sess., 1990, Rept, 101-790, part 1, p. 8.

44. Pamela S. Falk, *The Political Status of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Americas Society, 1986) p. 4.

TABLE 1.1 VOTES CAST IN 1967 PLEBISCITE

Status	Vote
	-
Commonwealth	60.4%
Statehood	38.9%
Independence	0.06%

Source: Adapted from U.S. Congress. House. *Report on Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act*, 101st Congress, 2d sess., H.R. 101-790, part one, p. 11.

To this day the issue remains unresolved due to controversy surrounding the plebiscite. First, the independence advocates boycotted the plebiscite for several reasons, mainly because of the United States presence and failure to transfer power to the island prior to the vote. Second, despite the overwhelming vote for continued commonwealth status, the independence advocates claimed that abstentions were really votes for independence.

Furthermore, even though both statehood and commonwealth supporters agreed that the outcome of the vote meant that the Puerto Rican people were squarely in favor of continuing their connection with the United States, they claimed that Governor Marin deliberately misrepresented the meaning of commonwealth to the people and took advantage of his popularity to do it.⁴⁵

Ultimately, it was the ambiguity of the status options as they appeared on the ballot that became the central issue. Hence, the legitimacy of the Commonwealth continues to arouse uncertainty.

2. Ad Hoc Advisory Groups

Between the adoption of the commonwealth status and the current congressional action, there have been other studies and recommendations for political change in Puerto Rico. Although these studies were jointly sponsored by the

45. Pamela S. Falk, *The Political Status Of Puerto Rico*, (Massachusetts: Americas Society, 1986), pp. 176-177.

President and the Governor of Puerto Rico, Congress has consistently failed to implement the recommendations. In 1970, an advisory group formed to study the possibility of granting Puerto Ricans the right to vote in U.S. presidential elections. The final recommendation was that Puerto Ricans should be granted the right to vote, and that a plebiscite on that issue should be held as soon as possible. To date, this plebiscite has never been held. Another group studied the United States-Puerto Rico relationship, and recommended increased autonomy for the island government. In 1975, a bill to implement the recommendation was introduced into Congress, but the bill died when Congress adjourned in 1976.⁴⁶

46. Roland I. Perusse, *The United States and Puerto Rico*, (London: University Press of America 1987), p. 2.

V. CURRENT PROCESS

The following section examines the current legislative process on the Puerto Rican status question. Clearly, the status question has dominated Puerto Rican politics for decades. In fact, once Puerto Rico adopts a permanent status, the major rallying cause for the three major island political parties will cease to exist. Despite the issue's consistent staying power in the forefront of Puerto Rican politics, it took the amalgamation of a number of political factors, both on the island and in the States, to inspire Congress to get another round of Puerto Rican status legislation going. For example, in the November 1988 gubernatorial race, Puerto Rico's Governor Rafael Hernandez Colon, an active supporter of the commonwealth status, barely hedged a re-election defeat by his pro-statehood opponent. This in itself did not signify a change in the popularity of the current status, but the fact that it was the fourth consecutive election where no candidate captured a majority of the votes, was enough for Governor Colon to signify his intention to resolve the issue once and for all.⁴⁷

For the first time, the leadership from all of the major Puerto Rican political parties agreed that it was time to make a concerted effort to produce a plebiscite for the

47. Beth Donovan, "Islanders May Soon Decide Age-Old Status Question", *Congressional Quarterly*, 1989, p. 1759.

island where once and for all, statehood, independence or an enhanced commonwealth status could be chosen.⁴⁸

Although Puerto Rico has the authority to hold a referendum, independent of the United States, party leaders learned from the 1967 experience that Congress does not necessarily feel obligated to implement the results of a domestically-initiated referendum.⁴⁹ Party leaders recognized that in order to have a binding plebiscite outcome, and one that the United States would commit to act on, it was absolutely crucial to gain the support of the United States government. Their letter, which solicited the support of the United States President and Congress, was indirectly answered when President Bush urged Congress to initiate the legislative process that would produce a plebiscite.

President Bush's public support for Puerto Rico's right to choose is not at all unusual. Every President since Eisenhower has advocated self-determination⁵⁰ without having to face the reality of Congress actually passing legislation that would significantly disturb the status quo. Committee Chairman J. Bennett Johnston and James A. McClure appeared

48. Ibid, 1759.

49. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act", report prepared by Congressman Udall, 101st Cong., 1st sess., 1990, Rept, 101-790, part 1, p. 12.

50. Tom Wicker, "America's Captive Nation", *New York Times*, 22 February, 1991.

to be bent on doing just that. First, Senator Johnston made reference to his belief that the people of Puerto Rico were American citizens who deserved to choose their status in a plebiscite, and then he and Senator McClure consulted the leaders of the major Puerto Rican parties to gain their input.⁵¹

Although some Congressmen clearly have parochial interests, these early actions seem to indicate that, among other things, a sense of fairness motivated Chairman Johnston's desire to spearhead the legislation. For example, states such as New Jersey can boast of having large, profitable pharmaceutical companies whose branch factories located in Puerto Rico benefit enormously from the federal tax exemption⁵² associated with section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code, under the commonwealth status. On the other hand, Senator Johnston's interest is rooted in his long-time experience in Puerto Rican issues. In 1973 he served as the chairman of the Interior Subcommittee on the Territories, and in the mid-1970s he was a member of the congressional Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Puerto Rico. In addition, he is well respected in Puerto Rico for his concern for the island.⁵³

51. Beth Donovan, "Islander May Soon Decide Age-Old Status Question", *Congressional Quarterly*, pp. 1759-1760.

52. Kelly Dumas, "Working Through Recess", *Congressional Quarterly*, 8 December 1990, p. 4076.

53. Ibid, p. 4076.

Predictably, there were a myriad of factors that indicated that some support of the legislative process was solely for the achievement of other agendas; some discreet, others clearly articulated. As was the case with the Foraker Act and the Jones Bill, the pursuit of these independent agendas resulted in the loss of any significant challenge to the current status quo.

A plebiscite bill was not passed for a number of reasons such as:

- (a) republican desire to gain Hispanic members for the GOP while intending to maintain the status quo, regardless of a possible winning vote for statehood;

- (b) resistance to the concept of a culturally Hispanic state;

- (c) enormous costs associated with the statehood option;

- (d) complexity of the legislative process; and

- (e) partisan politics.

A. SENATE BILLS

The legislative process led next to the drafting of three referendum bills in the Senate: S710, S711, and S712. S710 is a proposition for a Puerto Rican referendum, without elaboration on the details. Senate bill 711 outlines general principles, but no specifics. S710, Johnston's and McClure's preferred bill, is a self-executing bill that would commit the United States government to automatically implement the

chosen status under detailed procedures. On April 5, 1989, S712 was introduced to the Senate.⁵⁴

B. HOUSE BILL

In contrast to the Senate, on May 9, 1990, the House Interior and Insular Affairs subcommittee, produced HR4765, a bill very different from S712. HR4765, introduced by Delegate Ron de Lugo of the Virgin Islands, directed the House Interior and the Senate Energy Committees to draft implementation bills for the chosen status, subsequent to the referendum. The House bill is known as the "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act".⁵⁵

The House referendum bill passed unanimously on the floor, and although S712 moved through the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and Senate Committees on Finance, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, it failed to reach the floor to be voted on before the 101st Congress adjourned, thus effectively deflating Puerto Rican hopes for a plebiscite before the island's political elections in 1992.⁵⁶

54. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act*, report prepared by Congressman Udall, 101st Cong., 2d sess., 1990, Rept, 101-790, part 1 p. 1.

55. Ibid, part 2, p. 1-3

56. Kelly Dumas, "Working Through Recess", *Congressional Quarterly*, p. 4076.

VI. KEY ISSUES

There exist a variety of logical reasons for Congress's failure to pass Puerto Rican status legislation. The complexity of the process, race and culture, partisan politics, and cost were all significantly negative factors. But, as in the past, reasons against change most often serve to conveniently mask the irresistible political attractiveness of preserving the status quo in reaction to the threat of real political status change. This situation is being perpetuated by non-consensus among Puerto Ricans, and most notably from the most vocal sector: Puerto Rican status lobbyists.

In the case of the 101st Congress, the statehood option triggered the most status legislation opposition. Despite efforts to draft "revenue-neutral" and preferential-free legislation, it became apparent that the statehood movement was gathering strength and momentum on a variety of fronts. First, more Puerto Ricans than ever before have expressed a preference for statehood. A public opinion poll taken in January of 1989 showed that commonwealth was preferred 52 percent as opposed to 41 percent for statehood. However, a poll taken in late 1990 showed as much as 48 percent of the

island population favored statehood.⁵⁷ According to some island polls, statehood is attracting more supporters. Second, statehood supporters have the outspoken support of President Bush, and given that the House-approved measure was soundly endorsed by leaders of the three major Puerto Rican political parties, it made statehood more attainable than ever before. Lastly, S712 became somewhat controversial in that some members of Congress believed that the bill expressed a clear and influential preference for the costly statehood option;⁵⁸ therefore, support for the bill was considerably weakened.

Thus there is a direct link between the perceived edge and preference for the statehood option, and the instinctive congressional status quo reaction that led to the demise of the plebiscite bill. Partisan politics provide just one example of why this was so.

What, then, are the key issues in the legislative process defining Puerto Rico's status? The following section will analyze these factors: partisan politics; complexity of process; culture and race; and cost.

57. Kitty Dumas, "Practice Makes Puerto Rico a Force Heard In Congress" *Congressional Quarterly* 8 December 1990, p. 4078.

58. Kitty Dumas, "Measure On Puerto Rico's Status Hits Snags in Both Chambers", *Congressional Quarterly*, 4 August 1990.

A. PARTISAN POLITICS

While Republicans traditionally have been staunch supporters of statehood, many congressional Republicans have reservations that may have allowed other motives to supersede the stated official position.

The Republican National Committee has been accused of trying to pry Hispanics from their traditional loyalty to the Democratic Party.⁵⁹ According to one aide, other Democrats have implied that President Bush made statehood an issue to garner Puerto Rican support, knowing that a Democratically controlled Congress 'will never agree to that' this session. Hence, the appeal for Puerto Rican statehood may merely facilitate the GOP's strategy for winning Hispanic votes. The Hispanic vote is increasingly important in Florida, Texas, California and several other states, and many Hispanics have already been attracted to the Republicans' tough anti-communist stance.⁶⁰

Oddly enough, S712 came under fire from Democrats and Republicans because the bill's language allegedly favored statehood. Republicans may have feared that a Puerto Rican state would result in two Democratic Senators and as many as

59. Laurence I Barrett, "Puerto Rico, The 51st Estado", *Time*, 26 March 1990, p. 19.

60. Beth Donovan, "Islanders May Soon Decide Age-Old Status Question", *Congressional Quarterly*, p. 1761.

five Democratic Representatives in Congress.⁶¹ On the other hand, Democrats are traditionally allied with the Popular Democratic Party, the pro-commonwealth party currently in control of most Puerto Rican elective offices. Democrats fear the loss of the tax-exempt status for U.S. businesses, should the statehood option win. Therefore, Democrats have been somewhat reluctant to support the bill.

Democrat and Republican Congressmen alike proved unable to lay aside well-established, traditional loyalties in favor of cooperation in producing referendum legislation.

B. COMPLEXITY OF PROCESS

If there were no other factors working against the passage of a status bill in the House and Senate, the sheer complexity involving the legislative process alone would be enough to stymie congressional action. Early on, Delegate De Lugo warned that "We in Congress can only go so far in our efforts to obtain a fair bill which we believe could be enacted. The nature of this process, given its level of difficulty and sensitivity, is that any party who wishes can torpedo the bill."⁶²

Perhaps Chairman Johnston's haste to get the bill out on the floor, thus hoping to avoid complicating the process,

61. Martin Tolchin, "Election On Puerto Rico's Future May Be Two Years Off, Senators Say", *New York Times*, 31 January 1991.

62. Kitty Dumas, "Measure On Puerto Rico's Status Hits Snags In Both Chambers", *Congressional Quarterly*, 4 August 1990, p. 2506.

achieved precisely the opposite effect. Most Congressmen, regardless of their inclination, had questions concerning the costs of the statehood and independence options. Others wanted to first settle the controversy on just who would be allowed to vote in the plebiscite. Still others opposed the one thing that Puerto Rican leaders realized was a necessity from the very beginning: obtaining a guarantee that Congress would be bound to implement the status outcome. Several Senators articulated that the pace of legislative action was much too fast for an issue fraught with so many complex implications and political obstacles.⁶³

Puerto Rican political parties also complicated the process. The pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PDP), and the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (NPP) both employed powerful and dogmatic lobbyists who were tasked with gaining the upper hand in the legislative process. Unfortunately, the lobbyist machines only contributed to the political deadlock. "When you have 80 lobbyists, it's hard to get anything done," said Allen Stayman, an aide to Johnston.⁶⁴

In the end, the House passed the referendum bill, HR 4765, but the legislation process died in the Senate when

63. Beth Donovan, "Senators Debate Cost To U.S. Of Puerto Rican Statehood", *Congressional Quarterly*, 29 July 1989, p. 1955.

64. Kelly Dumas, "Practise Makes Puerto Rico A Force Heard In Congress", *Congressional Quarterly*, 8 December 1990, p. 4074.

Johnston declared that the Senate version was too fundamentally different from the House bill for a compromise to be worked out in the remaining 101st Congress session. Chairman Johnston's refusal to act on the House bill seriously damaged his appearance of altruistic commitment to resolving the status question, given that leaders from all three Puerto Rican parties had pleaded with Johnston to accept the non-binding House bill.⁶⁵

Thus far, the legislation process has fared no better with the 102nd Congress. Chairman Johnston had removed the S712's self-executing provision, but this significant alteration was not enough to make the bill any more appealing to Republicans. Therefore, the House Republicans failed to endorse the issue.⁶⁶ The lack of consensus in the House and Senate means that not only will the Puerto Ricans not have a referendum in 1991, but that it will probably have to wait until 1993 because there is a general agreement that a referendum should not be held in 1992, when Puerto Rico holds general elections.

C. CULTURE AND RACE

If there are hindering factors that have historically played a recurring role in how Puerto Rico's status has been shaped, it would be race and culture. Beneath the obviously

65. Kelly Dumas, "Working Through Recess", *Congressional Quarterly*, p. 4076.

66. Bill McAllister, "Puerto Rico's Political Leaders Urge Referendum", *Washington Post*, 31 January 1991.

political reasons for the legislation's failure lurks the possibility that the measure was not supported for reasons of race and culture.

After all, says Don Nickles, an Oklahoma Republican, Puerto Ricans might not "blend" with the U.S. if they chose statehood. Exactly, says Wendell Ford, a Kentucky Democrat, who describes Puerto Rico as that sinister thing, a separate culture. Malcom Wallop, Republican from Wyoming is all for letting Puerto Ricans

hold a referendum as long as Congress can ignore the results."⁶⁷

Although Puerto Ricans have bravely fought in all American wars since WWII, some Senators seem to suggest that Puerto Rico would not fit into the Union because of Puerto Rican nationalist sentiments. Senate Majority Whip, Wendell H. Ford said that, "Nationalism cannot be stamped out...It can be suppressed, in my opinion, for the moment, but it is going to rise again."⁶⁸

In addition, some Republicans are unhappy with the prospect of having a state that has Spanish as the official language. Their fears are not groundless as the Puerto Rican House of Representatives had already passed a "Spanish only" bill in October of 1990. In addition, some 58 percent⁶⁹ of

67. "New York Times Editorial Supports Puerto Rico Plebiscite", *Congressional Record*, 26 February 1991, E627.

68. J. Jennings Moss, "Senators Leery of Puerto Rico as 51st State", *Washington Times*, 21 February 1991.

69. Bill McAllister, "Puerto Rico Statehood Movement Gains", *Washington Post*, 27 December 1990.

the population are unable to speak English. A few senators such as Senator Kent Conrad from North Dakota argued that they would not vote for statehood because Puerto Rico's Hispanic culture, mixed with statehood, would lead to a situation similar to Canada, where French-speaking Quebec has become a divisive issue among Canadians.⁷⁰

Although Puerto Rico's Hispanic culture was rightly given general consideration in Congress, it appears that a few congressmen were prepared to consider it as a major detractor.

D. COST

Without doubt, no single issue affected the failed outcome of the legislation effort more than cost. Again, this is so because of the enormous costs associated with statehood. Given that the expensive statehood option appeared to have not only the lead in preference, but a slant in the language of S712 as well, Democrats and Republicans alike had reason to lose enthusiasm for the bill.

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), if Puerto Rico were to become a state, over 9.4 billion additional dollars would be required during the first four years to cover the cost of new social entitlements. Puerto Rico's per capita income in 1988 was \$5,673 - half of Mississippi's

70. *Congressional Record - Senate*, 21 February 1991, p. S2076

which is the poorest state in the Union.⁷¹ Presently, more than half of the island's population lives below the national poverty line, thus accounting for the dramatic increase in federal spending.⁷²

Although the Energy and Natural Resources Committee predicted that between 1992 and 1995, the government would gain a total of \$1.2 billion in new tax revenue, and by 2000, \$18.8 billion,⁷³ some members of Congress argue that there are no reliable estimates, particularly because one of the unresolved controversies centers around the proposal to only gradually phase in income tax requirements for Puerto Rico.

As each state in the Union faces more stringent budget constraints, Congressmen are forced to put the priority for spending funds in their respective states. Senator Paul Simon of Illinois said it best when he said, "I have helped the Puerto Ricans some, but obviously my major responsibility is to the people of Illinois."⁷⁴

Under commonwealth, Puerto Rico's economic growth is projected at an annual rate of 2.5 to 4 percent. This is

71. Bill McAllister, "Puerto Rico Statehood Movement Gains", *Washington Post*, 27 December 1990.

72. Beth Donovan, "Potential Cost of Statehood Far Exceeds Other Options", *Congressional Quarterly*, 18 November 1989, p. 3152.

73. Ibid.

74. "Commonwealth Status For Puerto Rico: Repackaged Colonialism", *Congressional Record*, 14 March 1991, p. 3462.

significant because Puerto Rico buys more goods from the mainland than Argentina, Brazil, Chile, plus Colombia combined.⁷⁵ Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, a Democrat from West Virginia articulated his concerns about Puerto Rico's status change and its potential to negatively affect other areas of the U.S. economy. "I am unable to separate the representation of my state from the consideration of this amendment",⁷⁶ Rockefeller said.

Democrats who favor the commonwealth status have a host of economic arguments against statehood for Puerto Rico. Hence the status quo is particularly appealing to them. For example, they argue that the loss of Section 936 would spell economic disaster for the island. They maintain that 100,000 jobs would be lost over the next ten years, causing the unemployment rate, now at 14.4 percent, to soar.⁷⁷ In addition, a Peat Marwick study concluded that 72 percent of the American companies that have put some 2,000 industrial plants on the island would leave, resulting in the loss of 80,000 to 145,000 jobs. Furthermore, a CBO report stated

75. Tom Wicker, "The 51st State?", *New York Times*, 9 February 1991.

76. Kelly Dumas, "Measure On Puerto Rico's Status Hits Snags In Both Chambers", *Congressional Quarterly*, p. 2506.

77. James J. Kilpatrick "Defeat Bills That Support Statehood For Puerto Rico", *Miami Herald*, 30 August 1990.

that the Puerto Rican gross product would fall by 10 percent to 15 percent.⁷⁸

The combination of staggering economic costs for statehood and shrinking state budgets naturally lessened congressional commitment to the passage of a plebiscite bill, particularly one that was self-executing and outcome-binding.

In summary, it comes as no surprise that this most recent attempt to provide the Puerto Rican people with an opportunity to permanently decide the island's status met with failure. Since 1900, Congress has enacted legislation to determine Puerto Rico's status on a basis other than Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. From the Foraker Act, to the Commonwealth Constitution of 1952, and now in these most recent attempts to resolve the status question, American political interests have hindered Congress's ability to honestly commit to allowing Puerto Ricans to resolve the status question. The primary reason for this is that Congress has a tendency to allow outside factors to lead it into opting for the status quo.

A variety of factors contributed to the latest referendum legislation failure. In this case, partisan politics, complexity of the legislative process, and culture all played key roles in this regard. However, it was the cost factor associated with the statehood option, and the accom-

78. Tom Wicker, "The 51st State?" *New York Times*, 9 February 1991.

panying vision of Puerto Rico as a welfare state that most strongly doomed the legislative effort.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY VIS-A-VIS PUERTO RICO

It is unknown, at this time, what the future status of Puerto Rico will be, but it is likely that Puerto Ricans will have an opportunity to choose between statehood, independence, or enhanced commonwealth. This section will examine the implications for U.S. policy vis-a-vis Puerto Rico in the military, international, economic, political, drug war, and terrorism fields.

Puerto Ricans have already experienced something to this effect with respect to the 1967 plebiscite. The difference between the 1967 plebiscite and one that will be held in the future is that this time, Congress will likely bind itself to implementing the outcome.

Therefore, conventional wisdom supports both the need for identifying areas that are important to U.S. national interests in Puerto Rico, and discerning the potential impact of each status on U.S. interests.

A. MILITARY

The fundamental importance of U.S. bases in Puerto Rico rests in the durability of the principles set forth in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. President James Monroe had declared that there was to be a clear distinction between the old countries under European purview and the New World that lay in close geographic proximity to the United States. European

encroachment and threats to the new republics in Latin America would be viewed as threats to the United States. Today, just as then, United States' goals of hemispheric sovereignty still very much drive U.S. national security interests in the Caribbean and in Latin America.

Military facilities in Puerto Rico can and have been used to fulfill defense requirements in terms of regional or global conflicts. Although the recent reduction of Cold War hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union necessitates a major re-assessment of the threat at the very least, Caribbean and Latin American security contingencies continue to require a proximate, ready, well-trained U.S. military presence. A sizable portion of the U.S. military response relies upon six viable military installations situated on over 48,000 acres of Puerto Rico's real estate. [see table 2.1]

Despite the new U.S. foreign policy emphasis on "partnership", and although U.S. strategy operates primarily in the *preventative* and *anticipatory* mode, there remains a rationale for using military force against threats.⁷⁹ Thus the possible loss of bases in Puerto Rico could have a negative impact upon the United State's capability to respond to challenges to its goals in the region by limiting either the United States' capacity for independent action or

79. David Ronfelat, "Geopolitics, Security, and U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean Basin", *Technical Report*, 27 April 1984. p. v

TABLE 2.1 MILITARY BASES AND INSTALLATIONS

Installation	Location	Acres
Navy:		
Roosevelt Roads Naval Station	Roosevelt Roads	32,161
Naval Security Group	Sabana Seca	2,618
Naval Communications Station	Ponce	1,913
Army:		
Camp Santiago	Salinas	11,431
Fort Buchanan	San Juan	828
Air Force:		
Fighter Group		
Total		48,995

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office, *Puerto Rico: Information for Status Deliberations*, p. 40, Government Accounting Office, Washington, DC, 1990.

constraining the United States within the bounds of inadequate in-country facilities.

1. Caribbean Security

The usefulness of U.S. bases in the Caribbean has already been historically proven. Specifically for Puerto Rico, bases for ships and aircraft were established at San Juan to prevent German entry into the Caribbean during World War II. In addition, the tiny Puerto Rican islands of Vieques and Culebra were used for amphibious landings and target practice.⁸⁰ Although the grand plans for providing anchorage, docking, repair facilities, fuel and supplies for the Atlantic Fleet were put on hold until after the end of World War II, U.S. military bases in Puerto Rico continued to be tied to a Caribbean policy that had protection of the Caribbean Basin as the "continental backyard of the United States"⁸¹ as its primary theme.

During the Cold War era, U.S. Naval Station Roosevelt Roads became the primary protectorate base for the Caribbean and the center for guided missile operations for the Atlantic Fleet. By 1957 the dredging of the harbor was completed, airfield runways were extended, and a missile

80. Paolo E. Coletta, ed. *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Domestic*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) p. xiii

81. David Ronfeldt, "Geopolitics, Security, and U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean Basin", *Technical Report*, 27 April 1985, p. 77

launching pad was built.⁸² In 1965, Roosevelt Roads had an opportunity to influence Caribbean events when it played an important role in the Dominican Republic intervention.

Roosevelt Roads was also vital to combating the Soviet threat in the Cold War era. In 1980 Vice Adm. G.E.R. Kinnear II testified at a House of Representatives' Armed Services Committee meeting and made the following comments:

The essential element that provides the U.S. Navy its advantage over the Soviets is our ability to deploy high performance aircraft; that is carrier aviation. They have us outnumbered in submarines and surface ships. Only in the area of high performance aircraft at sea do we have the edge...The Roosevelt Roads total training complex, of which Vieques is and integral part, is absolutely essential in enabling us to maintain that margin.⁸³

The significance of military bases in Puerto Rico in the current post Cold War era is being shaped by the uncertainties of future events. For example, naval forces and assets from Roosevelt Roads were an integral component of the U.S. Forces Caribbean located at Key West, Florida. A two-star admiral directed the Forces' many missions that included coordinating and conducting operations in the Caribbean in support of national objectives from emergencies, natural disasters, to limited war, or general war.⁸⁴ This entity is

82. Paolo E. Coletta, ed., *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Overseas* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) p. 273.

83. Ibid., p. 274

84. Guy F. Abbate, Jr. "Homeporting a Destroyer Squadron at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico", *Technical Report*, 18 July 1986. p 20.

now defunct as of 1 July 1989. Yet there remain strong reasons for believing that military facilities in Puerto Rico have by no means outlived their role in United States national security, despite the declining Soviet threat. For example, loss of military installations in Panama and Guantanamo Bay (Cuba) by the year 2000 may dramatically increase the significance of bases in Puerto Rico. Reopening Ramey Air Force Base in Puerto Rico will again give the U.S. an operational air base located south of Texas, should Howard Air Force Base in Panama close. In addition, Roosevelt Roads will play a crucial role in protecting the sea lanes between the Venezuelan oil fields and Gulf Coast refineries.

If the majority vote is cast in favor of statehood or commonwealth, then Roosevelt Roads can be further enhanced by the relative freedom to choose to homeport a multi-purpose squadron of destroyers or frigates. In addition, Roosevelt Roads will be useful in protecting Atlantic sea routes that are used by oil tankers too large to sail the Suez.⁸⁵

The following specific scenarios show how a particular challenge may require a Puerto Rico-based military response:

(a) Sabotage of the Panama Canal or political instability in the Caribbean touches off tensions; and

85. Ibid, p. 274

(b) Special Forces that receive training at Naval Station Roosevelt Roads retrieve U.S. citizens held by revolutionaries or terrorists.⁸⁶

The United States has had recent, real-life opportunity to prove the utility of the training environment provided at Roosevelt Roads. For example, in 1989, Commander of Caribbean naval forces, William O'Connors, explained how the carriers *Coral Sea* and *America* utilized Roosevelt Roads to practice nocturnal radar-guided bombing maneuvers. These maneuvers were used to deal effective blows to Libya in 1986 and to Iraq during the recent Gulf crisis. In addition, aircraft from the carrier *Saratoga* intercepted a commercial flight carrying the participants in the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro*. The *Saratoga* had also utilized the training areas at Roosevelt Roads.⁸⁷

Department of Defense officials have expressed their concern over the possible loss of bases in the Caribbean under an independent Puerto Rico. They maintain that regardless of the option chosen, there are certain facilities that merit retention for their national security value and that the current military presence is vital to strategic defense.

86. Regina Brzozowski, "Puerto Rico: Views on Status Alternatives", *The Times of the Americas*, 26 July, 1989, p. 5.

87. Victor Rodriguez, "Democracy and Decolonization", *International Report* V. 9, No. 2, July 1991, p. 3.

The list of vital facilities is as follows:

- (a) Roosevelt Roads Naval complex;
- (b) Vieques Island;
- (c) Naval Security Group, Sabana Seca;
- (d) Punta Borinquen radar site (CBRN);
- (e) Punta Salinas radar site (CBRN);
- (f) San Juan International Airport/Muniz Air National Guard Base;
- (g) Borinquen Field access; and
- (h) Camp Santiago.

Puerto Rico is not merely an island whose location holds strategic value for U.S. forces. Indeed, military facilities in Puerto Rico offer training for and enhance the readiness of the Atlantic Fleet as no other East Coast military facility can do. Brigadier General M.J. Byron, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Of Defense testified before the Senate Committee On Energy And Natural Resources on July 11, 1989. He argued that there were "...no suitable options available for an alternate site that allows the breadth of integrated training required."

Currently Roosevelt Roads hosts four major military exercises annually. All weapons systems of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range are tested during the Navy's wintertime maneuver known as Operation Springboard. Operation Rimex is a multi-ship exercise to train and test units in weapons systems. Operation Storm Fury is held to monitor tropical

storms. Lastly, Roosevelt Roads coordinates a large Marine Corps exercise, Operation Firex.⁸⁸

In addition to the training exercises conducted at Roosevelt Roads, is the drill conducted at Camp Santiago, Exercise Tradewinds.

Between August and October of 1981, the Puerto Rican island of Vieques was the site of the largest naval exercise by the U.S. since World War II. The following November the DOD upgraded its regional defense network, which includes the Antilles Defense Command in Puerto Rico to command status. Its areas of responsibility include Caribbean waters and islands, Gulf of Mexico, and parts of the Pacific bordering Central and South America.⁸⁹

In addition to the capability of military bases in Puerto Rico to cover a broad range of mission possibilities in and around the Caribbean Basin, their very presence provides a visible and stabilizing force for other island nations. The result will have an effect of heightening Basin leaders' perceived U.S. commitment to preserving Caribbean political and military security. Thus the importance of military bases

88. Paolo E Coletta, *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Overseas*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) p. 273

89. Sandra W. Meditz and Dennis M. Hanratty, *Islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean: a regional study*, (Washington D.C.: Federal Reserve Division of the Library of Congress, 1989), p. 598.

in Puerto Rico is not bound by the existence of or lack of a Soviet threat.

2. Drug War

The war on drugs involves more than just the countries of Latin America. Although most Caribbean countries do not produce a significant amount of illegal drugs, they are often used as transshipment points by Andean countries.

The drug trade and its corrupting influence threaten political and economic stability in the region. Not only is the insidious consumer drug market in the United States being fed by shipments from Mexico, Colombia, and other Latin American countries, but also from the Caribbean Basin. The United States insular areas constitute the Caribbean and Pacific borders for the United States. These borders have the least amount of protection and are being used to transship lethal drugs to the United States mainland.

The U.S. military, specifically the sophisticated radar sites in Puerto Rico, may be asked to take on an increased role in drug interdiction. There is evidence to suggest that drug smuggling organizations that specialize in ferrying cocaine and marijuana from Barranquilla, Colombia to Puerto Rico, and then on to Miami for distribution are on the rise.⁹⁰ Thus the numerous radar sites located in Puerto Rico, and the support that the communications facilities

90. Mike McQueen, "Puerto Rico's Drug Queen Held in Miami", *Miami Herald*, 11 May 1990.

provide, are an integral part of the overall Caribbean Basin Radar Network (CBRN).

Military radar sites in Puerto Rico are not the only tools being utilized in drug interdiction efforts. Various local agencies have dedicated substantial resources for not only thwarting the arrival of drugs from Puerto Rico to the U.S. mainland, but for combating a serious domestic drug epidemic. Puerto Rican officials have an irresistible reason for dedicating valuable time and effort to interdicting drugs. The island is being ravaged by Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) spread about by intravenous drug use.

In 1986, the United Forces for Rapid Action against Drug Trafficking (FURA) was formed to execute the majority of the island's law enforcement plans. The agency also coordinates local agencies with federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Coast Guard, and Drug Enforcement Administration.⁹¹ In addition, in 1986 the U.S. Congress allocated \$7.8 million dollars to Puerto Rico for the purchase of drug interdiction aircraft, vehicles, and other equipment under Anti Drug Abuse Act. In its first year, FURA seized over \$1 billion dollars worth of drugs. In early 1988, FURA seized \$42,500,000,000 in drugs.⁹² Lastly,

91. Congress, House, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *Implementation and Amendments to the Insular Areas Drug Abuse Act*, 100th Cong., 2nd sess., 16 June 1988, pp. 28-29.

92. Ibid, p. 23

Puerto Rican officials have successfully captured narcotics-traffickers. For example, Arturo Durazo Moreno, former Chief of Police in Mexico City and corrupt trafficker was arrested in Puerto Rico and extradited.⁹³

B. POLITICAL

Puerto Rico's importance to the United States is more difficult to define. There has never been a single Washington office established to coordinate U.S. relations with Puerto Rico, and the Executive branch has been inconsistent in its rhetoric and action. For example, in 1976 President Ford said "I will submit legislation to Congress requesting the admission of Puerto Rico to the Union as a state." Subsequently, nothing happened. At the time Ronald Reagan declared his candidacy for the Presidency in 1980 he stated, "it is my intention to initiate legislation, shortly after I become President, requesting statehood for Puerto Rico." Again, nothing was accomplished to that end.⁹⁴

Today what is obvious is that there is some degree of political friction between George Bush's statehood supporters and Puerto Rico's Governor Rafael Hernandez Colon, who favors continued commonwealth status. When Bush ran in the 1980 Puerto Rican primary, he made public his commitment to

93. Scott B. MacDonald, *Dancing On A Volcano*, (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 82

94. Major Benigno Sierra-Irizarry, *Puerto Rican Statehood and the Caribbean Basin Stability*, (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air Command and Staff College Air University) p. 27, photocopied.

statehood. As President of the United States, Bush endorsed the plebiscite and reaffirmed the Republican party's traditional support for statehood. Ever since, there has been criticism from Colon that the language of the bill sponsored by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee appears to favor statehood over the other options. Governor Colon also criticized two White House aides for spending an entire week lobbying on the island for statehood. This activity prompted Colon to ask President Bush to "pull back; call off your troops." He added that "the people of Puerto Rico have the intelligence, the capability, the desire and the good common sense to make our own decision."⁹⁵

On the other hand, Puerto Rican political parties that support statehood are delighted with the apparent U.S. preference for statehood. Former Governor and President of the New Progressive Party, Carlos Romero Barcelo had this to say about the situation:

There is no single event that I can think of that would do more to improve the United States' relations with Latin America than accepting Puerto Rico as a state. It would say: "We can work with Spanish-speaking people. We don't think of our selves as superior as you think we do."⁹⁶

95. Martin Tolchin, "Puerto Rico Chief Says U.S. Exerts Pressure for Statehood", *The New York Times*, 17 May 1990.

96. Jeffrey Schmalz, "With U.S. Help, Puerto Rico Seeks its Own Identity", *New York Times*, 10 July 1989. p. A9.

There is one thing that supporters of statehood and commonwealth are united in: fear that independence leadership would turn Puerto Rico into a Marxist state as an inevitable result of economic disaster. Although proponents of independence are not hesitant in expressing their willingness to give up U.S. aid in exchange for independence, there is no evidence that links independence advocates to support of Marxist ideology. In the event that independence becomes the people's choice, the United States should be prepared to continue with some sort of adequate financial aid to the island to preclude a fall to Marxism.

The current state of world affairs in which the United States finds itself both the victor in the Cold War and undisputed global power, has had a peculiar effect on the traditional views on U.S. foreign policy associated with the American conservative right and the liberal left. This may have a direct influence on United States Puerto Rico relations by directing the course of future policy action concerning the island's status. For example, during the Cold War Era, political thinkers of the far right persuasion were most vocal in advocating an aggressive, highly visible role for the United States in world affairs. The post Cold War Era has seen a curious split in the foreign policy outlook by members of the right. Some have now adopted an American isolationist view which is contrary to the traditional perception of extensive American responsibilities on the

world stage. Influential political thinkers such as right-wing, conservative, syndicated columnist Patrick Buchanan are now implying that the United States should take on more inward-looking policies, to the exclusion of possible statehood for Puerto Rico. In their estimation, this is not the time for the United States to initiate a plebiscite in which the United States could be bound to the admission of Puerto Rico as the 51st state.

Their objections are not based solely on legitimate fears over the fiscal costs associated with the possibility of statehood. Separatism is now in vogue around the world. The break-up of the Soviet empire is a vivid example of the enduring power of nationalism and cultural distinction. Perhaps some see a parallel situation with Puerto Rico in that the Soviet Union was comprised of people who had been, for the most part, involuntarily classified as Soviet citizens although they were in fact non-Russian members of distinct, cultural nations. The not so subtle implication raised by some right-wing conservatives is that while a particular group of people might be classified as United States citizens, that does not mean that they are perceived as Americans, nor does it mean that the group necessarily wants to be perceived strictly as American. Therefore,

people like Patrick Buchanan put forth the hypothesis that "We may be about to create a Northern Ireland in the Caribbean."⁹⁷

Mr. Buchanan goes on to call up the specter of the Civil War which was fought to stop Confederate states from seceding. "Are we prepared to send troops, if the people of Puerto Rico should later change their minds?"⁹⁸ The polls taken in Puerto Rico that indicate up to half of all islanders are in favor of statehood, is in fact the biggest detractor of status legislation from the isolationist viewpoint.

On the other hand, support for a referendum has also come from the far right as well as the left for a number of possible reasons. Republican Senator James A. McClure clearly represents an ultra-conservative whose actions manifest a deep commitment to Puerto Rico status legislation. There is perhaps the unspoken accusation on the part of some members of the right that the current status represents a state of "neocolonialism" that has outlived its usefulness. Furthermore, once the United States made the decision to confer American citizenship on the Puerto Ricans, it had in fact committed itself to granting statehood.

97. Patrick Buchanan, "Puerto Rico as Our 51st?" *Washington Times*, 26 February 1990

98. Ibid.

It is not yet clear if future U.S. foreign policy will be more a product of the current attractiveness of returning to American isolationist roots, or more of heightened involvement and responsibility in world affairs. Either stance could have an impact on when and if Puerto Rico status legislation comes to pass.

C. ECONOMIC

Puerto Rico's future status could have an impact on the United States foreign economic policy known as the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). An independent Puerto Rico would be entitled to the same provisions now enjoyed by Central America, South America, and the entire Caribbean Basin. Absolute levels of economic assistance to the region have declined since FY 1989, because of U.S. efforts to reduce the government's budget deficit.⁹⁹ The result is that Puerto Rico's increased level of participation means that there will be less to go around for everyone else.

An independent Puerto Rico may also spell the loss of oil, that one commodity that has the ability to shape U.S. foreign policy, as evidenced by the Gulf crisis. The sharp increase in U.S. oil consumption demands have helped Puerto Rico to make a significant contribution to the Caribbean oil industry. Two of the three oil refineries in Puerto Rico

99. Sandra W. Medtitz and Dennis M. Hanratty, eds, *Islands Of The Commonwealth Caribbean: a regional study*, (Washington D.C.: Federal Reserve Division of the Library of Congress, 1989), p. 665.

are owned by major U.S. oil companies. Gulf Oil refinery, located at Bayamon, refines 138,000 barrels per day. At Yabucoa, the Sun Oil refinery is capable of refining 100,000 barrels per day. The independent company, Commonwealth Oil Refining, refines 160,000 barrels per day at the Penuelas refinery. In addition, extensive offshore and onshore exploration are taking place on the North Coast and in Terrato. U.S. production firms have been encouraged by the results of seismic geological exploration.¹⁰⁰

A majority vote cast in favor of continued commonwealth status could also have hidden consequences that would have an impact on foreign policy. Integration of Puerto Rico's economy into the United States has not relieved the problems of import dependency or trade imbalance, hence the long-term viability of the island has not been assured. It is possible that the federal government may come to view the Puerto Rican economy as an unacceptable social burden.¹⁰¹

As is the case in the rest of the region, the political fallout of these socioeconomic problems is difficult to measure. But uncertainties only mask potentially severe security problems.¹⁰²

100. Raymond J. Cully, Jr., *The Strategic Importance of Caribbean Oil Facilities to the United States*, (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981) pp. 28-29

101. Thomas H. Moorer and Georges A. Fauriol, "Caribbean Basin Security", *The Washington Papers*, p. 43.

102. Ibid, p. 44.

On one hand, Puerto Rico's struggling economy could be doing much better, on the other, Puerto Rico has been successful in using the commonwealth status to perform a service for the United States in the area of economic growth and stability in the Caribbean. For example, in 1985, Puerto Rico established the Caribbean Development Program. This program has used over \$632 million dollars of section 936 funding to finance, market, and promote 87 projects for 12 CBI members. [see table 3.1] This represents aid to a Caribbean market comprised of 50 million people with a domestic output of \$75 billion and whose trade is worth more than \$65 billion.¹⁰³ Section 936 would not be available under statehood or independence, thus the commonwealth option provides a unique opportunity for Puerto Rico to play a significant role in the economic development of the Caribbean.

D. TERRORISM

Puerto Rico has played a key role in the nature of American influence in the region. Specifically, Puerto Rican nationalism and the possibility of terrorist action on the island as well as mainland is an influence that figures into regional security policy just as much as revolution in Nicaragua, insurgency in El Salvador, or Cuban communism.

103. *Puerto Rico*, Citibank, May 1991, p. 33.

TABLE 3.1

COMPLEMENTARY PLANTS & PROJECTS FINANCED WITH 936 FUNDS

Country	No. of Projects	Total CBI Investment	936/CBI Financing
Barbados	5	\$ 14,680,000	\$ 13,750,000
Costa Rica	11	10,574,000	-
Dominican Republic	43	180,315,000	126,000,000
Dominica	3	2,600,000	2,100,000
Grenada	3	2,602,000	-
Guatemala	1	500,000	-
Haiti	3	1,415,000	-
Jamaica	10	185,109,000	177,980,000
Panama	1	140,000	-
St. Kitts	1	500,000	-
Trinidad	4	190,270,000	135,000,000
U.S. V.I.	2	42,135,000	36,135,000
Totals:	87	\$631,840,000	\$491,885,000

Source: Caribbean Development Office, February 1991

Terrorism on the part of some Nationalists who seek independence is not a new phenomenon. In September of 1922, the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party (PRNP) formed with the main objective of destroying the existing government by any means, in order to end U.S. dominion and establish an independent island.¹⁰⁴ Given that less than 10% of the Puerto Rican population favors independence, a small group of radical Nationalist have resorted to terrorism in an attempt to influence the future status.

The first major mainland terrorist act occurred in 1950 when two revolver-packing Nationalists attempted to assassinate U.S. President Harry S. Truman at his temporary Pennsylvania Avenue residence. Just four years later, four Nationalists indiscriminately fired bullets into the gallery of the Washington House of Representatives. Their goal was to gain notoriety in the world press and to embarrass the United States at the Tenth Conference on Inter-American Affairs at Caracas.¹⁰⁵

Since then, Puerto Rican terrorist groups have gone through several phases of merging and splintering. Today the best known group and most active within the continental U.S. since 1974 is the *Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacion-*

104. Thomas Burns, "United States and Western European Terrorist Groups - Current Status and future Perspective", *Technical Report*, 29 September, 1982, p. 18

105. Earl Parker Hanson, *Transformation: The Story of Modern Puerto Rico*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955) pp. 79-80.

al (FALN). Their declared goal is nationhood; their preferred tactic is continental bombings. In 1982 targeted areas included the American Stock Exchange and the Chase Manhattan Bank. These incidents notwithstanding, FALN activity has been severely curtailed subsequent to the arrest and imprisonment of several key leaders. There are at least seven other identifiable Puerto Rican terrorist groups that have been successful in carrying out violent acts in the United States and on the island.¹⁰⁶ In addition, there are various island and continental Puerto Rican political groups that endorse terrorist organization activities.

These groups can be expected to become more active if and when the plebiscite is actually held. This poses a most serious problem given that the number of terrorist incidents claimed by groups supportive of Puerto Rican independence outnumbers those claimed by all other Jewish, Cuban, Armenian and Islamic separatist groups.¹⁰⁷ The United States intelligence community should consider the implications of the results of surveys conducted in Puerto Rico that consistently show the number of Puerto Ricans favoring independence is 10% and often less, while a 1989 [see table

106. William Sater, *Puerto Rican Terrorists: A Possible Threat To U.S. Energy Installations?* (Santa Monica: A Rand Note, 1981), pp. v-vi

107. Bonnie Cordes, Bruce Hoffman, Brian M. Jenkins, Konrad Kellen, Sue Moran, and William Sater, *Trends in International Terrorism, 1982 and 1983*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation R-3183-SL), p. 3.

4.1] survey taken of persons of Puerto Rican origin residing in New York City showed a significant number of independence supporters. The July, 1991 *International Report* story records that there are approximately 30 radical Puerto Ricans who consider themselves to be prisoners of war or political prisoners. The combination of the presence of radicals and independence supporters on the mainland represents a potential security risk if they choose violence as a vehicle for political expression.

Perhaps the most notorious terrorist group that threatens American assets primarily in Puerto Rico is the Borinquen People's Army - Macheteros. In the early 1980's this group was responsible for three deaths, one armed robbery, and numerous bombings resulting in significant damage. For example, 40 million dollars worth of damage was caused when bombs destroyed over nine military jet fighters at the Muniz Air National Guard base. Over ten million dollars of damage was wrought when bomb blasts damaged two electricity substations. The Macheteros have also targeted U.S. military personnel for attack, in an attempt to rid the island of "occupation forces". In one such attack, terrorists tried to assassinate three U.S. Army officers in San Juan. In 1979, an attack took place upon a bus carrying U.S. Navy personnel at Sabana Seca.

Table 4.1

Support for Status Options,

New York City Puerto Ricans: July and August 1989

	Percentages	No.
Commonwealth	36%	164
Statehood	34%	155
Independence	18%	82
Undecided	12%	55

Total: 456

Source: Adapted from Victor Rodriguez, "Democracy and Decolonization", *International Report*, July 1991, p. 3

Two U.S. sailors lost their lives and ten others were wounded.¹⁰⁸

There are several key points that should be noted:

(a) The Macheteros are a thriving group that emphasize attacks on military or high value economic targets while the FALN target low value commercial or civilian U.S. government offices, and is by and large defunct;

(b) Incidents of mainland attacks have declined, while on the island they have increased.

(c) While Puerto Rican terrorist groups espouse Marxist-Leninist ideology, they are first and foremost devoted to separatism rather than socialism.

(d) Terrorism is likely to continue to be a threat because the democratically-determined political choice will most likely not be that of independence; however, if independence were chosen, Puerto Rican terrorist groups would no longer have a reason for action.

(e) Terrorist threats against the nuclear industry must be taken seriously even though the tactics and weapons do not indicate the capability for a successful attack.¹⁰⁹

108. Thomas Burns, "United States and Western European Terrorist Groups", *Technical Report*, 29 September 1982, pp. 20-21.

109. William Sater, *Puerto Rican Terrorist: A Possible Threat To U.S. Energy Installations?*, (Santa Monica: Rand Note N-1764-SC, October 1981), p. vii.

One interesting and perhaps far more dangerous branch of political terrorism emanates not from pro-independence forces, but potentially from right-wing counter-terrorists. Although such a danger of significant magnitude has yet to be realized, a bomb attack in a Mayaguez restaurant in Puerto Rico known to be frequented by pro-independence groups resulted in the death of two people.

E. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The status of Puerto Rico has largely been an issue involving two political actors: the United States and Puerto Rico. From time to time though, the international community has functioned as a third political actor to influence the shape of Puerto Rico's political status. In the past, Cuban protests over Puerto Rico and the adversarial relationship with the United States have figured most prominently in this aspect of international involvement. This time around, it could be the United States that uses the Puerto Rico issue as a bridge between the American and Cuban governments, given Puerto Rico's close historical and cultural ties to Cuba.

The United Nations has been the dominant element of the international community to involve itself in Puerto Rico's status. The post-WWII international climate was one of decolonization and in December of 1946, the General Assembly put together a declaration that encompassed the principle that relations between friendly nations should be based on respect for equal rights and self-determination. The Decla-

nation Regarding Non-Self Governing Territories was intended to see that certain territories, including Puerto Rico attained a state of self-government.¹¹⁰

The United States was required to report on the state of Puerto Rico's affairs under the United Nations' system of accountability. Thus, at least once a year, Puerto Rico's political status came under world scrutiny. Perhaps the combination of international accountability requirements and the contradiction between America's possession of various territories and her lead role in decolonization hastened the process that led to the 1952 formalization of a new relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States based on the end of direct U.S. administration.

The United States had satisfied the U.N. requirements for the removal of Puerto Rico from the list of non-self governing territories in the eyes of the majority of Latin American governments. When the issue came up for a U.N. vote, only the Mexican and Guatemalan governments opposed Puerto Rico's removal from the list, while Argentina and Venezuela abstained from voting. The implication here is that because Latin Americans share feelings of kinship with Puerto Rico, and the majority of Latin American nations signaled their approval of United States policy toward Puerto Rico, the status issue served to further the opportu-

110. Richard J. Bloomfield, ed., *Puerto Rico: The Search for a National Policy*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 101.

nity for increasing the level of good-will between the United States and Latin America.

If there are two countries that did not experience feelings of increased good-will towards the United States because of the Puerto Rico status issue, it would be Cuba and the Soviet Union. Recent political as well economic changes within the Soviet Union have radically altered both the Soviet rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s as well as the relevance of Soviet opinion of this issue to the United States. On the other hand, Cuba continues to bring the issue of Puerto Rico's status before the U.N. General Assembly in attempts to embarrass the United States and promote negative views of American foreign policy throughout the Third World, as it has since the 1960s.

Cuba's interest in Puerto Rico is not merely a convenient propaganda tool. Indeed, U.S. policymakers would do well to remember that not only are there historical political ties between the forces of Cuban nationalism and Puerto Rican independence, but in general, cultural ties between the two Hispanic islands.

It is precisely those ties that the United States could explore as a possible avenue for rapprochement. Throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, countries such as Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada, Argentina, Brazil and others have all experienced a much heralded wave of democratic reform that

has resulted in Cuba becoming one of the last bastion of dictatorship in this area. United States foreign policy analysts have assessed these developments in relation to the viability of prospects for political change in Cuba. A resolution to the Puerto Rico status issue could be useful in bringing democracy to Cuba.

If Castro is removed from power or dies in office, it will not necessarily signal the end of Cuban anti-Americanism, or distrust of United States foreign policy in Latin America. The first step towards reconciliation could very well be a freely-held referendum on the Puerto Rican status, in which the United States Congress agrees to abide by the results. Such action could partially allay Cuban fears of American imperialism, while simultaneously opening up a path of communication via Cuba's Puerto Rican neighbors. In addition, Puerto Rico could serve as a conduit for highly desirable economic incentives to Cuba by setting up joint ventures, twin factories and assistance from the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

In summary, this section examined implications for U.S. policy and concludes that it is both the military and economic factors that are of equal importance and influence in this issue.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the 1967 plebiscite, Puerto Ricans overwhelmingly cast their votes in favor of retaining the commonwealth status. Commonwealth may still be the option of choice among Puerto Ricans due to the perception that no matter how much Puerto Ricans identify themselves with independent Latin American countries, Puerto Rico is inextricably intertwined, culturally and economically, with the United States. The enhanced commonwealth option is also the better choice from the perspective of the United States government as well. It is far less costly than statehood, and far more likely than independence. Lastly, it is a political status guaranteed to preserve identified U.S. national security interests.

The period in 1991 in which it appeared that Puerto Ricans were well on their way to having a plebiscite occurred because the three major Puerto Rican political parties galvanized, and President Bush nudged Congress to begin drafting the necessary status legislation. What followed was an intense period where lobbying organizations pressed the American Congress strongly for their respective status choice without having obtained a clear, popular consensus from Puerto Ricans. At the same time, the statehood option was being pushed vigorously by some top U.S. officials, including President Bush. The primary reason for

statehood being the most favored option for some in Washington is that it would once and for all define Puerto Rico's political status, and thus provide a permanent premise for U.S.-Puerto Rican relations and the formation of policy in the region. Thus it seemed as though the question of Puerto Rico's future status was and should be determined on three levels: How highly is political and economic independence valued? How deeply do the Puerto Ricans feel their political impotence? And lastly, are economic advantages associated with dependency enough compensation for second-class American citizenship? However, these considerations are primarily from the Puerto Rican perspective, and at this time there is no fool-proof barometer for measuring the true feelings of the Puerto Rican people. The absence of a clear status consensus only serves to make these considerations of secondary importance in their ability to influence the outcome of this issue.

The reality of the situation is this: The United States Congress has been the primary definer of Puerto Rico's political status since 1900. Furthermore, the status question represents one of many matters of U.S. national interests that will be decided mostly by the action or inaction of the American Congress, despite the wishes of the current President. No Congress, now or in the future, will likely produce binding referendum legislation without having first obtained persuasive confirmation that there is a consensus

in Puerto Rico on the status of choice. A lead in the statehood or independence option (the two most drastic political status changes) should clearly reflect that the particular selection is the desire of at least 60 percent to 70 percent of the Puerto Rican population. To implement a binding choice in a plebiscite where possibly one option is chosen by 50 percent or less of the population, would at the very least invite radical terrorist action on the mainland, as well as on the island.

Given that there is no clear consensus at this time, the United States national interest is best served by Puerto Rico remaining in the commonwealth status. This by no means a recommendation that U.S. officials permanently endorse the status quo. On the contrary, in the absence of a plebiscite, the American Congress can institute specific enhanced commonwealth features to improve economic and political conditions. In addition, this issue will continue to burn in the hearts and minds of many Puerto Ricans because of dissatisfaction with some political and economic aspects of the current commonwealth status. It is stressed that a Puerto Rican plebiscite is at some point virtually inevitable, and that the enhanced commonwealth status is most beneficial to the United States. Subsequent to the 1992 island elections, periodic polls should be taken to monitor status preferences in Puerto Rico, until a 60% or more consensus is reached. At such time, Puerto Rican political leaders should once again

present a united request to the American Congress for plebiscite legislation.

Given that the premise is that Puerto Ricans can and will have the opportunity to vote on their political status, then the Congress of the future that finally enacts the legislation should enjoy an enormous advantage because the majority of the background work for identifying and preserving United States national interest as concerns the island has already been completed thanks to the efforts of Senators J. Bennett Johnson and James A. McClure. In the meantime, Congress should continue to take time for fine-tuning points of the self-executing legislation pertaining to each possible option.

Regardless of *realpolitik* limitations, Puerto Ricans should decide what will be the course for the island in keeping with America's assertion that self-determination is a fundamental political right of man.

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